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HOW TO STOP THE DIGITAL DARK AGES? THE ROLE OF ARCHIVES IN PRESERVING DATA OF COMMUNITIES

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Abstract:

According to the Digital Preservation Coalition community, generated content in arts and heritage is classified as critical endangered cultural digital heritage. This also applies to other forms of data from private individuals, civil society initiatives, sports and cultural associations, or religious communities. Every day, data from this area is irretrievably lost. Are we therefore approaching the 'Digital Dark Age' (Terry Kuny, 1997)?

As simple and self-evident as it is today for archives to take over paper documents from entities that do not originate from their creator institutions, the situation is unclear when it comes to digital files. Technical barriers, concerns about data security, fears of overburdening one's own archival resources, and even fundamental rejection are all part of a diffuse discourse that prevents action. At the same time, historians are increasingly demanding digital sources for their research. To this end, they often resort to holdings from non-archival contexts: YouTube videos, screenshots of social media posts, or PDF documents from websites are used as bits of information and cited with varying degrees of success. Know-how about the source-critical analysis of these documents is often completely lacking, and a methodology has not yet been developed.

This article attempts to summarize the archival discourse on the archiving of documents from a private context and to make it comprehensible by means of examples. It raises the question of the extent to which advising private individuals and taking over data are becoming new core tasks for archives, and what role archives should play in this regard.

Keywords:

digital preservation, personal digital archiving, archival appraisal, contemporary collecting, accessibility

Izvleček:

Kako ustaviti digitalno mračno dobo? Vloga arhivov pri ohranjanju digitalnih podatkov skupnosti

Po mnenju organizacije Digital Preservation Coalition se vsebine s področja umetnosti in kulturne dediščine, ki jih ustvarja širša skupnost, uvrščajo med kritično ogroženo digitalno kulturno dediščino. To velja tudi za druge oblike podatkov, ki izvirajo od posameznikov, pobud civilne družbe, športnih in kulturnih društev ali verskih skupnosti. Vsak dan se podatki s tega področja nepovratno izgubljajo. Ali se torej približujemo »digitalni mračni dobi« (Terry Kuny, 1997)?

Čeprav je danes za arhive samoumevno in preprosto, da prevzamejo papirnate dokumente od subjektov, ki ne izvirajo iz njihovih ustvarjalnih institucij, pa postane situacija nejasna, ko pridemo do digitalnega gradiva. Tehnične ovire, skrbi glede varnosti podatkov, strahovi pred preobremenitvijo lastnih arhivskih virov in celo temeljno zavračanje – vse to je del širšega

diskurza, ki preprečuje ukrepanje. Hkrati pa zgodovinarji za svoje raziskave vse bolj zahtevajo digitalne vire. V ta namen se pogosto zatekajo h gradivu iz nearhivskih kontekstov: videoposnetke na YouTubu, posnetke zaslona objav na družbenih omrežjih ali PDF-dokumente s spletnih strani uporabljajo kot vire informacij in jih citirajo z različno stopnjo uspeha. Pogosto jim manjka znanje o kritični analizi virov, metodologija pa doslej še ni bila razvita.

Ta članek poskuša povzeti arhivski diskurz o arhiviranju dokumentov zasebne provenience in ga s pomočjo primerov približati bralcem. Postavlja vprašanje, v kolikšni meri postajata svetovanje posameznikom in prevzemanje njihovih podatkov novi ključni nalogi arhivov ter kakšno vlogo naj bi arhivi v tem oziru igrali.

Ključne besede:

digitalno ohranjanje, osebno digitalno arhiviranje, arhivsko vrednotenje, sodobno zbiranje, dostopnost

1 Introduction

The starting point is the consideration that we, as those responsible for archival collecting, are facing new challenges in the age of digitality.[1] This new social formation of our society that has been developing since the turn of the millennium means that we have to think about collecting in a completely different way, as our actions and the associated practices are not simply being digitised— rather the basic form of our culture is changing. Felix Stalder defines three paradigms of the age of digitality: Firstly, referentiality, which encompasses the creation of reference systems used by large sections of the population. The second element is communality, which includes new forms of creating 'communal formations', particularly through social networks. 'Attention' forms the glue that holds these networks together. The last and most specific factor are underlying algorithms: large parts of our cultural processes are organised and pre-sorted by machines. Without these algorithms, it would no longer be possible to orientate ourselves in the masses of data, but at the same time they create new dependencies. Viewed separately, all three of these elements already had their historical stages of development in earlier eras. In combination, however, and above all in the completely new intensity they represent the basic social structure of this era since the late 1990s (Stalder, 2016). But, what do referentiality, communality and algorithms mean concerning archival collecting? Which digital documents replace the analogue personal collections, which consisted in the 19th and 20th centuries of letters, postcards, diaries, photographs and other written or typed notes? How can we form digital personal holdings under these new circumstances?

Since the beginning of the 21st century, major steps have been taken in the field of archiving to establish digital archiving systems. There is hardly an archival administration in Europe, that has not yet set up its own digital archiving agenda or organised digital preservation on the basis of the reference model Open Archival Information System (OAIS).[2] This new task poses a major challenge especially for small archives, but we, as archival community, are aware of the necessity of taking action. Specialist applications, electronic records, websites, intranets and social media presences of records creators and their officials are being ingested into the digital preservation systems.[3] Does this

[1] *I would like to express my sincere thanks to Tamara Kefer and Jennifer Ebenstreit for their critical feedback and the discussions and conversations we had about this article.*

[2] *This is particularly the case in centrally organised state administrations such as those in France, Hungary, Czech Republic or Slovenia.*

[3] *Particular reference should be made here to the municipal and state archives in German-speaking countries, which implement digital archiving via commercial providers or network solutions.*

mean that the spectre of the Digital Dark Ages, as described by Terry Kuny, has been banished (Kuny, 1997)?

In this text, I argue that, despite all our efforts, we are still on the path to a ‘dark’ digital age. Why? In his famous article from 1997, Kuny argues that we have only a few, strongly biased views of the European medieval times, as only monks and a few aristocrats had the ability to create and archive records. However, it is the monks and scholars who shed at least a little light on this era. The lives of the vast majority of people, who lived as peasants or urban dwellers, remain in the dark. This is why this era is called the ‘dark ages.’ Kuny states, that we are heading once more in this direction. If we, as archives in the 21st century, focus our efforts on the digital archiving of administrative documents, we are once more preserving only the perspective of the ’ruling class’. After all, imagine historical research based solely on administrative documents. What would the picture of the age of digitality look like? Would the people of that time have a voice in the holdings of public archives? Would traces of their everyday lives be authentically preserved?

In my point of view, we, as archivists, should be able to give a proper answer on these questions. I want to argue that we need to focus on personal forms of digital tradition as well. This has not been in the centre of archival attention for decades. But in recent years, there are more and more archivists, who try to draw attention to this (Bauer, 2008; Jääskeläinen and Uosukainen, 2018; Pfistermüller, 2024). With this demand they follow a movement within and without our public archival walls to integrate records from individuals. Today individual items, fragments or more or less complete estates, are among the most sought-after holdings in our archives. By the way: the continued focus on the collection of administrative documents from the ‘ruling class’ was one of the main critiques against archival practice provoked by Jacques Derrida in 1995 (Schenk, 2013; Keitel, 2018, pp. 59-70; Caswell, 2021). This discussion is strongly connected to the emergence of social history and cultural studies since the 1960s and led to the formation of new civil engaged archives and collections since the 1970s (Flinn, 2015). But also archives reacted on these critiques by including more collections of personal documents (diaries, postcards, letters etc.).

Today we may ask ourselves: What data have citizens been producing from their increasingly digital lives since the 1990s which is now of archival value? What reflects aspects of the realities of life: the tens of thousands of photographs and videos taken each year since the smartphone revolution began in 2007? Self-documentation in websites, blogs, email, social media and messenger accounts, apps or video portals? Who passes on this data: private individuals or data companies? The latter hardly ever. They store and reprocess selected data for their own purposes. Data companies are no archives! Private individuals often lack both the expertise and the technical infrastructure to keep their own data available for themselves in the long term, let alone to archive it independently of software and hardware. My argument is that the concept of personal digital archiving (PDA) must therefore become a new mandatory task for archives. However, if we take this statement seriously, it does not just mean that we assign this task to an employee. This will change our role as an archive, because we will then no longer be merely an institution that collects and preserves, but also a player in lifelong learning and citizen participation.

2 Historical and archival studies: the noncommunicating vessels?

Historical studies and archival science have traditionally been closely intertwined, even interdependent. At least in German-speaking countries, historical studies consider archival science to be one of the 'auxiliary sciences of history.' Conversely, in most European countries archivists still regard a degree in historical studies as fundamental training for subsequent archival education. Nevertheless, at least in German-speaking countries, there is only little dialogue between these two disciplines. There is strong evidence that archival discourse is also rarely reflected upon in other disciplines in other language communities (Caswell, 2016; Keitel, 2018, pp. 62-64). History study curricula are usually drawn up without consulting archives. Archives do not consult historians in questions of appraisal, description, or digital and analogue access opportunities. Initial mutual efforts are being made to break this silence (Becker, Haffer, Lehrmann and Meier, 2024 eds.). First approaches to involve the historical community and citizen scientists are tested (Benoi and Eveleigh, 2019 eds.).

It is high time to take a proactive approach here! Firstly, historical research naturally also deals with the recent past. If we consider this to be at least the span of a generation (25 years), then we are already in the midst of the digital age. Secondly, there is a trend in (contemporary) historical research, in line with an interdisciplinary approach, to deal with periods much closer to the present.[4] Good historical scholarship is source-based research—both quantitatively and qualitatively. And historians are not holding back in the digital era. They simply need born digital materials. Research opportunities and ease of accessing vast amounts of born digital data on the internet are simply too attractive. Footnotes are becoming increasingly filled with information gleaned from websites, Facebook posts or YouTube videos. In some cases, historians are developing sophisticated digital methods for verifying, authenticating and validating this data (Föhr 2019; Wurthmann and Schmidt 2020). A trend, which responds to the missing archival supply?

Archival digital preservation has rarely been discussed in historical research discourse to date. On the one hand, this is because most archives that preserve digital collections are still working on their digital reading rooms.[5] On the other hand, there is still no recognised set of methods for examining digital archival records. It is undisputed that the classic dual approach—external and internal source criticism—will continue to exist. However, there is a complete uncertainty as to how and which steps should be taken in the analysis of digital data within the framework of external source criticism (Becker, Haffer, Lehrmann and Meier, 2024 eds.; Feichtinger, 2022). There is also still no clarity about what students should learn during university studies in history in order to

[4] *See, for example, the programmes of the Austrian Contemporary History Days of recent years: 13th Austrian Contemporary History Day: Nach den Jubiläen, 2020. Universität Innsbruck, https://www.uibk.ac.at/de/zeitgeschichte/zgt20/; 14. Österreichischer Zeitgeschichtetag: Risse in der Zeitgeschichte. Transformation – Konflikte – Perspektiven 2022, Universität Salzburg, https://www.plus.ac.at/geschichte/tagungen/zeitgeschichtetag-2022/; 15. Österreichischer Zeitgeschichtetag: Zeitenwenden – Wendezeiten? 2024. Universität Graz, https://zeitgeschichtetag-2024.uni-graz.at/; etc.*

[5] *For some examples, see: Digitaler Lesesaal des Bundesarchivs, https://digitaler-lesesaal.bundesarchiv.de/; Digitaler Lesesaal des Staatsarchivs St. Gallen, https://dls.staatsarchiv.sg.ch/; etc.*

deal with digital *archivalia*. It is clear that it must change, but in what direction is uncertain (Hiltman and Althage, 2024, pp. 57-85).[6]

The initiative of the International Council on Archives (ICA) to endorse the Statement on Digital Rights for Protecting Memory Institutions Online and in Germany of the NFDI4Memory to adopt archival and historical education on digital preservation is of great importance (Statement on Digital Rights for Protecting Memory Institutions Online, s.d.; Holste and Naumann, 2026). It is to be hoped that these fine words will be followed by concrete action, in particular new curricula and more resources for digital preservation. What is important here is that this dialogue takes place and is promoted in the interests of both spheres: historical and archival science. We need a greater awareness of what OAIS-compliant digital archives can and cannot do. And historians need to know the difference between a Dissemination Information Package being provided by a standard conform digital archive and data being collected randomly from the web—in terms of concept, method, practical handling and accessibility.

This necessary discourse also includes the question of the acquisition of holdings: What data is actually archived? As stated in the introduction, I assume that historical research on the late 20th and 21st centuries will require not only administrative records but also data from private individuals, associations, religious institutions and companies. Churches and public institutions, as well as many larger companies, have their own digital preservation—there is already a big interest in legal certainty here. But who preserves data from private individuals or civil society institutions? *Bewegungsarchive* (non-governmental community archives), as they are called in German-speaking countries, usually have limited resources and are dependent on subsidies or donations. This often causes significant fluctuations in their activities or even a complete halt to their work. In most European countries public local and regional archives have a legally defined mandate to create collections from individuals.[7] Also state or university archives accept personal documents or from non-governmental institutions in accordance with a documentation profile that corresponds to their archival administrative district. In my point of view, we should rearrange our relationship to community archives in a new way. We should think more about cooperation and joint support, without questioning each other´s role and function.

In the digital realm, however, collecting poses a greater challenge than it did in the analogue sphere. As with digital administrative records, personal digital data also requires a pre-archival field that generates data suitable for archiving. If the people lose their data, or it is not possible or very expensive to use it anymore, it is simply lost for us. Is it not our core task as an archive to draw attention to the loss of cultural assets and to take measures to preserve them? Does that not also apply to digital cultural heritage—of private as well as of public provenance? This is where the concept of PDA comes in. Individuals must be empowered in questions of arrangement, storage, accessibility, autonomy and handling of their data. And it is in our interest as archives to participate in this dialogue to underline our competences and our potential interest in the acquisition of personal data of archival value.

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6 *Christiane Berth headed a group of interested from all over Europe to discuss this question in a series of lectures and a workshop 2024-26 at the University of Graz. It is to be hoped this initiative will be proceeded.*

7 *As stated for example in section 3, subsection 1, sentence 2 of Grazer Archivordnung 2019.*

3 One solution: personal digital archiving

PDA aims to teach private individuals critical data awareness and support them with knowledge so that they can ensure the use of their data at least for their lifetime. In German speaking countries, a working group on PDA has been established within the nestor network.[8] The working group developed the website meindigitalesarchiv.de and published it in 2020. The website provides information and tools for different personas on their own areas of activity (meinDigitalesArchiv.de, 2020). In English-speaking countries, a lively debate on getting in touch with citizens to support them in archiving has developed based on the Canadian concept of 'total archives' (Cook 2015): archives, libraries and museums began much earlier to think about collecting personal data, to address interested parties and to train them with expertise (Nesmith, Bak and Schwartz, 2020; Owens, 2024). Some archives even adopted a rapid response collecting guidance, a method previously used mainly by museum collections (The National Archives. Rapid response collecting guidance, 2025).

At the Municipal Archives Graz in Austria and the Aschaffenburg City and Abbey Archives in Germany we were inspired by all these initiatives. However, we also faced the challenge that we had hardly any resources to devote to this. That is why we developed a Creative Europe project in 2020/21, which was finally accepted. It seemed logical to us to combine artistic and creative approaches with the concept of PDA. The second part of the project, which involved adult education institutions from the partner countries Italy and Greece, focused on the educational concept of futures literacy. The common ground between these two concepts is that they are both future-oriented and aim to motivate those affected to act in the present (Dialog City, 2022).[9]

In the project we developed a digital platform between June 2022 and January 2026. Together with citizens, archivists, data activists and scientists we set up a profile of requirements for a webtool, which allows citizens to offer data to a cultural heritage institution. We also developed the demands of cultural heritage institutions to curate and acquire the data offered. The main idea of the archive institutions is: If the data matches the documentation profile, it should be transferred to the archive's ownership in a legally and technically compliant manner as OAIS and EAD conform Submission Information Packages. So, we built the whole Citizen Archive Platform (CAP) only for registered users. The focus of the platform is to transfer data. This means that the data will be deleted, after it was rejected as not of archival value or it has been downloaded as *archivalia*. Preservation, description and access are carried out via a separate infrastructure (Citizen Archive Platform, 2024). The WordPress based software is open source and is made available via a GitHub repository. We also provide a transition framework that outlines the organisational, technical and archival conditions prior to implementation (stadtarchivgraz / CAP, 2025).

In the project we also developed a mediation and education programme on PDA: training courses were offered in Graz at the Academy of Public Administration for municipal employees and users of the city libraries. Workshops were held with interested parties in Aschaffenburg and Graz. The board game Preservia, originally developed by the Dutch State Archives for experts, was further developed jointly for non-experts. The game combines the key points, which were previously taught in the courses, with a

[8] *Nestor aims to develop and provide guidelines for the responsible handling of digital data in archives, libraries and collections in German-speaking countries.*

[9] *At the Radenci conference 2025 Amelie Rakar and Björk Košir had the honour to present the Citizen Archive Platform (Rakar and Kosir 2025).*

mystical story in a fun way. Events and exhibitions rounded off the educational programme (Rakar and Kosir 2025; Dornik, Kefer, Košir, Pfistermüller and Rakar, 2026).

The platform and the package of measures were presented in 2024/25 at various conferences and in individual meetings in Europe, the USA and New Zealand. A total of around 1,400 colleagues were introduced to the concept. Eight institutions signed a letter of intent to express their willingness to think about integrating the CAP into their infrastructure. At the Municipal Archives Graz itself, we transferred the CAP into a new platform (grazsammeln.at, 2026). This will now be used in the coming years in conjunction with the Graz Museum, with which we share an administrative unit.

4 Digital archivalia

The two years of collecting in the Dialog City project allows us to have a first glimpse in the new forms of *archivalia* of the age of digitality. During the courses on PDA between 2023 and 2025 we realized that people need hints of what we are looking for. So, we started with calls for submissions on certain topics. In Graz we asked to submit data on the football teams from the city, the small ones as well as the ones from the National League, the year of the EU Capital of Culture 2003, the “disappeared city” (lost buildings and urbanized green spaces), and finally important moments of women’s history. In Aschaffenburg people were asked to submit data on summer experiences. With these topics we tried to underline our interest in everyday life history. We wanted to enable as many people as possible to get involved. Of course we promoted the calls with advertising materials (flyers, coasters), exhibitions, in social media, on our websites and with active media work. A total of 104 users from Graz and Aschaffenburg sent us 2,307 files. Most of these files were provided by a very small number of users.

From 2163 submissions to Graz, we accepted 2048. For every submission of a single file or bundles of archival value, we signed an agreement with the donators. In this contract we clarified the status of the donations as a gift, all legal aspects relating to copyright, personal rights and data protection. The donors had the option of placing a restriction period on the data submitted or releasing it for immediate use. It was a big surprise for us to observe that nearly all submissions were approved for immediate publication. There was even a frequently expressed desire to publish the data immediately on the CAP. This wish was also expressed during the needs assessment at the beginning of the project. However, we decided not to include this requirement, as archives and museums have already web interfaces of their databases or more recently digital reading rooms.

Around 98 percent of the files submitted are pictures, most of them born digitals, some retro digitized photos. Only a small number of files are not pictures: we have retrieved 38 pdf-files and eight videos. We asked the donators to contextualize the data with date, person, place and keywords. These metadata were important for appraisal and will be important for the archival description.

At this point, we cannot say why almost all submissions are images. Of course, we have illustrated the calls for submissions with pictures, and these examples may have encouraged imitation. However, media discourse has also been strongly dominated by images in recent years, with written text generally losing importance. Another aspect may also lie in the data structure stored by users: as the PDA courses have shown, photographs from mobile phones are among the most important media for memory of the users. In some cases, this role is already being taken over by videos. Moving images take up a great deal of data, which, despite all the technical progress, still poses a

problem in terms of storage, processing and transfer. No sound or other multimedia files, no e-mails or e-mail accounts, no messenger conversations or social media accounts were submitted. This data requires a much higher level of technical understanding to extract it from existing environments and transfer it. Many users also do not know how to obtain data from providers. And there is still a high level of trust that e-mail account providers will keep this data available in the long term. Only a few are aware of their own data autonomy and of the risk of obsolescence.

Do we get from the so far submitted data a new understanding of Graz or Aschaffenburg in the late 20th and early 21st century? Is the data representative for the age of digitality? What conclusions can we draw after these initial calls for submissions? Firstly, this first sample of new digital *archivalia* was an experiment. We learned a lot about what works and what does not work in the process of collecting. We built up new networks and tested new ways of getting in touch with people. Secondly, many citizens are still unaware that their data may be relevant not only to them, but also to us as archives. We can only draw a representative picture of our time, when we integrate as many aspects of our present as possible. Thirdly, digital collection is not just a technical challenge. The CAP can help us to transfer data and enrich contextual information. However, it does not replace the need to engage in dialogue with our citizens, which is important for us as archives. Fourth, we have so far lacked feedback from historians about what they expect in terms of personal data. We must think about new formats of engaging with researchers and community archives on questions of collecting and appraisal to form archival holdings.[10] Fifth, before starting to collect, it must be clear what is being sought. A documentation profile or collection concept for the whole institution is needed. And the question has to be clarified, how to deal with data that is only partially suitable for archiving from a technical point of view, but is worthy of archiving in terms of content?[11] Finally, I can say that this first attempt was an important experience for us overall, and that the archive material we acquired is also a valuable algorithmic addition of to our holdings. But this first sample is no representative sample of the referentiality and communality of digitality in our cities—it´s just a start. Both in archives of Graz and in Aschaffenburg, we will continue collecting personal digital data and experiences in this new archival field.

5 Conclusion

With our efforts in practical PDA, we measured tools, which may help us in making our collections more adjusted for the age of digitality. In the current state, collecting personal digital data is no problem of quantity—which is the same for personal paper collections. The number of citizens who can handle their data und who are motivated to hand it over to an archive, is very limited. There are still lots of aspects of our reality, which are not covered in our archival holdings. We still struggle with the big amount of work to get files of archival value to process them. Archives have just limited paths to reach out for people, built up relationships and motivate them to get active. But it is nevertheless very fruitful for archives. It is a new way of getting in touch with people, of raising awareness for archival matters and of building new alliances with other stakeholders. This is the most important, what makes it worth integrating PDA in our everyday work.

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[10] *Without immediately slipping back into emotional debates about professional boundaries and disciplinary protection (Keitel, 2018, pp. 104-115).*

[11] *We got lot of data in low quality offered, especially from the 1990s and early 2000s (i.e. low quality photos, highly compressed files etc.).*

However, there are several questions we still must discuss—in our teams and within the archival community. How many resources can and are we willing to invest in advising private individuals on the creation of archivable data? Can we motivate our archive providers to finance this new core task? How much personal data do we need to create a representative picture of the present day in the digital age? Can we afford to apply the strict rules for archivable data to personal data as well? To be honest: The task to collect born digital data from individuals is an ambitious goal. So far, we can only take one step at a time. In our view, the set of measures proposed represents an option for cultural heritage institutions to meet the new challenge of collecting in the age of digitality. So, don´t hesitate, let's start doing our job!

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POVZETEK

KAKO USTAVITI DIGITALNO MRAČNO DOBO? VLOGA ARHIVOV PRI OHRANJANJU DIGITALNIH PODATKOV SKUPNOSTI

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Prispevek obravnava, kako nastop dobe digitalnosti v temeljih spreminja arhivsko delo in postavlja pred ustanove s področja varstva kulturne dediščine nove izzive. Pri tem se avtor opira na definicijo Felixa Stalderja in izpostavlja tri paradigme, ki oblikujejo današnjo digitalno družbo: referencialnost, tj. ustvarjanje in povezovanje referenčnih sistemov širših populacij; skupnostnost (communality), ki pomeni oblikovanje družbenih in kulturnih mrež, ki jih povezuje dinamika pozornosti; in algoritmičnost, tj. vseprisotno upravljanje in filtriranje kulturnih procesov s pomočjo strojev. Čeprav ima vsak element svoje zgodovinske korenine, pa ustvarja njihova dandanašnja prepletenost novo družbeno stanje, ki globoko preoblikuje kulturne prakse, vključno s tistimi, ki se nanašajo na nastajanje, upravljanje in arhiviranje dokumentarnega gradiva.

V zadnjih dveh desetletjih so arhivi po vsej Evropi vzpostavili sisteme digitalnega arhiviranja. Nacionalne, regionalne in lokalne institucije zdaj zajemajo administrativne podatke, kot so elektronske datoteke, specializirane aplikacije, spletne strani in družbeni mediji. Vendar avtor trdi, da se kljub tem prizadevanjem družba še vedno približuje novi »digitalni mračni dobi«. Ta pojem je leta 1997 zasnoval Terry Kuny in služi kot opozorilo: tako kot imamo iz srednjeveškega obdobja na voljo le omejene, elitno ustvarjene zapise, tudi današnji arhivi tvegajo, da bodo ohranili predvsem administrativno dokumentacijo, pri tem pa zanemarili obsežno področje osebnih digitalnih podatkov. Takšno neravnovesje bi prihodnjim generacijam zapustilo nepopolno in izkrivljeno sliko vsakdanjega življenja v začetku 21. stoletja.

Avtor poudarja, da so sicer zasebni zapisi – pisma, dnevniki, fotografije, osebne beležke in drugo gradivo – že dolgo pomemben del arhivskih zbirk. Vendar pa v digitalni dobi državljani vse pogosteje ustvarjajo podatke med ustvarjanjem fotografij, videov, blogov, računov na družbenih omrežjih, aplikacij za sporočanje in osebnih spletnih strani. Ti zapisi pa se le redko ohranjajo trajno. Posamezniki pogosto nimajo tehničnih zmogljivosti za upravljanje lastne digitalne zapuščine, medtem ko komercialne platforme shranjujejo le izbrane podatke, nikoli za arhivske namene. Zato avtor trdi, da mora postati osebno digitalno arhiviranje (PDA – personal digital archiving) nova bistvena naloga arhivov.

V prispevku je poudarjena tudi vrzel med zgodovinskim raziskovanjem in arhivsko prakso. Čeprav namreč zgodovinarji vse pogosteje uporabljajo digitalne vire, pa obstaja le malo metodoloških smernic o tem, kako kritično ovrednotiti arhivske podatke iz digitalnih arhivov. Podobno so arhivi do danes dosegli zgolj omejen napredek pri ponudbi dostopnih digitalnih čitalnic. Za zagotovitev usklajenosti ohranjanja digitalnega gradiva s potrebami raziskovalcev je potrebno sodelovanje.

Kot rešitev za ta izziv opisuje avtor razvoj projekta PDA, temelječega na mednarodnih modelih. V okviru tega projekta, financiranega od EU (2022–2026), sta Mestni arhiv Gradec in Mestni arhiv Aschaffenburg ustvarila odprtokodno platformo, ki državljanom omogoča, da na organiziran način in v skladu z zakonodajo prispevajo

osebne digitalne podatke (Citizen Archive Platform). V okviru projekta so bili razviti tudi izobraževalni programi in delavnice, celo družabna igra, da bi na ta način ozaveščali javnost o digitalnem arhiviranju. Čeprav je za zdaj udeležba še vedno omejena, pa predstavlja pobuda pomemben korak k večji raznovrstnosti arhivskih zbirk in spopadanju z izzivi digitalne dobe.

About the author:

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O avtorju:

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